

# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

Reunion Stress Management

## **Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**

**Resources for Educating About Deployment and You**



# Homecoming and Reunion

## Reunion Stress Management

### Facilitator's Guidelines

This section provides the facilitator with resources needed to plan and conduct a workshop.

Each workshop unit has **4 sections**:

- Facilitator's Guidelines  
helps the facilitator make preparations for the workshop
- Workshop Overview  
highlights the key components of the workshop
- Workshop Plan  
provides the facilitator with an outline for conducting the workshop
- Workshop Resources  
include program activities, supporting videos, flyer, handout materials, and transparency masters

**Topic:** Reunion Stress Management

**Goal:** Help soldiers and family members recognize and deal with problems that may arise or persist after the soldier returns.

**Audience:** This session is designed for **soldiers** and their **spouses** to attend together. It is most helpful to offer this workshop as soon after reunion as is practical, following the Communication Techniques workshop (preferably on the same day).

**Time Required:** 1 ½ hours

**Room Requirements:** This training requires a room large enough to accommodate the soldiers and their partners. The training process is group work at round tables of 8–10 people. Work is done with an activity handout, with flip chart activities in groups, or with flip chart activities facilitated by the instructor. The room should be arranged for maximum visibility of the flip charts, videos, and overheads.

**Facilitator's Preparation:**

1. Reserve a location for conducting the training that will accommodate the number of attendants
2. Prepare flyers (located in the Flyer Master section) and distribute them 1–2 weeks before the workshop.
3. Familiarize yourself with the goals of the workshop.

4. The facilitator's job is to lead the workshop, which includes distributing handouts and organizing group flip chart activities. Other tips include:

- ✦ plan an ice breaker
- ✦ encourage participation
- ✦ check for understanding
- ✦ prepare room
- ✦ make workshop personal
- ✦ gather needed material
- ✦ enjoy yourself
- ✦ offer amenities, such as child care, parking, and refreshments

5. Suggested activities are presented in square brackets ([ ]) in the lesson text.

The lesson text is meant to assist you and is not intended to be read aloud to the participants. The **suggested activities** list the visuals, handouts, or group activities that are used at particular points in the workshop.

6. Prepare overhead transparencies from the Transparency Masters provided:

- #1 Reunion Stress Management
- #2 Objectives
- #3 Adjustment Tips
- #4 Giving Back to the Community

7. Preview the video, *Getting Back Together* (710652/TVT 20-1048), and the Video Discussion Guide, if you plan to use them in the workshop.

*Note:* A video is not used for every workshop. Determine if participants have already seen it and expand your workshop, if necessary, to show the video.

8. Prepare flip chart paper (for facilitator use) with the following titles:

**Stress** (single sheet) with two columns:

**Soldier**

**People at Home**

**Resources for Soldiers and Families** (single sheet)

9. Reproduce the necessary numbers of handouts from the Handout Masters:

- #1 Reunion Priorities
- #2 Sources of Support and Assistance for Soldiers and Families
- #3 Evaluation Form

10. Assemble all other needed workshop materials and equipment.

**Workshop Materials:**

- Flip chart paper on 1 easel with colored markers
- Extra markers for flip chart paper activities at tables
- Masking tape for securing charts
- Pens and pencils for participants' use

**Equipment:**

- Overhead transparency projector and screen
- Television and VCR

11. *Note:* Issues in this workshop are best addressed by the Family Advocacy Program Director or a counselor who has skills to recognize undue stress.

# Homecoming and Reunion

## Reunion Stress Management

### Workshop Overview

*(time 1📄 hours)*

Estimated Time	Presentation Section	Visual-V Handout-H
5 minutes	Introduction Objectives	V#1 V#2
5 minutes	Common Reunion Stressors	Flip Chart activity (facilitator)
20 minutes	Reunion Priorities	H#1, Questions 1 and 2
10 minutes	Group Discussion	
15 minutes	Break	
10 minutes	Role Adjustment	H#1, Questions 3 and 4
10 minutes	Discussion	
5 minutes	Adjustment Tips	V#3
5 minutes	Helpful Resources	Flip Chart activity (facilitator) H#2
5 minutes	Giving Back to the Community	V#4
5 minutes	Conclusion	H#3

# Homecoming and Reunion

## Reunion Stress Management

(time 2📄 hours)

### Introduction

[Visual #1: *Homecoming and Reunion Stress Management*]

Welcome to this final session of the Homecoming and Reunion workshop. This training is designed for **soldiers**, both married and single, and **family members**.

You will learn to recognize the stressors associated with postdeployment adjustment by participating in a variety of activities.

### Objectives

[Visual #2: *Objectives*]

During our time we have together, you will:

- Recognize the common stressors associated with postdeployment adjustment
- Identify information and referral services in your community
- Identify practical ways to “give back” to the community to show appreciation of their support

In the Homecoming and Reunion workshops which many of you attended before you came home, or before your soldier returned home, you talked about stress. Those workshops dealt with the joys and concerns, expectations, and fantasies of returning home.

Now that everyone is back together, you have different challenges due to the many adjustments you are experiencing.

### Common Reunion Stressors

[Flip Chart activity (instructor)]

This question is for those who were deployed. What are some things that have caused you stress since you have returned home?

I will write your responses on the flip chart paper.

(record responses under flip chart column, “Soldiers”)

Now, let's hear from those who remained here during deployment. What are some things that have caused you stress since you have been reunited?

*(record responses under flip chart column, "People at Home")*

Let's look for similarities in the 2 columns. As you can see, there are several.

Some of them are expected. For example: trying to do too much; trying to make up for lost time; noticing how well the other person has done without you; negotiating activities and roles; determining how to fit in; a homecoming letdown; whether your intimate relations will work out; who is in charge of what; who do I listen to, mom or dad?

There are many more—all common areas of stress after deployment. We will look closely at several of these.

Remember, all these stressors and readjustments will take time to work through. Readjustment does not happen immediately.

One stress after deployment is finding the time needed to work through the stressors and to readjust. There is so much to do, so much to readjust to, and so much to catch up on, that time just flies.

## Reunion Priorities

*[Distribute Handout #1: **Reunion Priorities** (No. 1)]*

On the activity handout, **Reunion Priorities**, you will notice many blank lines on the first page. Above each of these lines is a word.

What I would like for you to do is to fill in the blanks under No. 1 with activities that you would like to do.

For example, next to "Myself," you might write "read 'X' book." Next to "Children," you might write "go to the zoo."

*(allow 10 minutes to complete)*

*[Handout #1: **Reunion Priorities** (No. 2)]*

Next you will see **4 areas** under No. 2:

- ☞ Urgent Priority
- ☞ Urgent, But Not a Priority
- ☞ Not Urgent
- ☞ Not Urgent, Not a Priority

Take 10 minutes to fill in the 4 areas with the appropriate activities you listed in No. 1.

For example, if you think that going to the zoo with your children is an Urgent Priority, put it in that area.

If reading "X" book is Not Urgent, But Still a Priority, list it in that area.



*(allow 10 minutes to complete)*

The purpose of this exercise is to help you identify things you would like to do and prioritize them. One major stressor after deployment is trying to do it all today because you want to make up for lost time!

Turn to your spouse and compare notes. Take a few minutes to discuss the differences and the similarities.

*[Group Discussion]*

*(allow 5 minutes for discussion)*

How did your answers compare? Were they just alike, or were there differences?

*(take a few responses)*

If you were to try this exercise with friends, your children, or other family members, what do you think the results would be?

*(take a few responses)*

As you can see, stress can occur when your priorities do not match with the priorities of people around you.

As we have discussed in earlier workshops, when this happens, it's time to renegotiate and communicate what we would like to do.

Let's take a 15-minute break. When we come back, we will continue this activity.

*[Break 15 Minutes]*

## **Role Adjustment**

Role adjustment is a major stressor for everyone at the end of a deployment. Many tasks done by the soldier before deployment were done by their spouse and children during deployment.

Time schedules, eating habits, and general ways of doing things may have changed. When the soldier returns, does everything automatically return to the way it was before deployment?

Most people say, "No way!"

*[Handout #1: **Reunion Priorities** (No. 3)]*

Look at No. 3 on your handout. Please take 10 minutes to answer those questions that apply to you.

*(allow 10 minutes to complete)*

*[Facilitator leads discussion]*

We will take a few minutes and look at some role changes you have listed.

Many of you have noticed similar role changes.

Let's start with the soldiers who were deployed. How have you adjusted to the role changes?

*(take a few responses)*

For those of you who remained here, are there any roles you would now like to give up since your soldier has returned, or any tasks you would like for them to resume?

*(take a few responses)*

How could you assist the soldier in adjusting to the role changes?

*(take a few responses)*

Soldiers dream about home and of the stability they had. They build up their expectations of homecoming based upon their past experiences—the way it was. But when they return home, it may not be the same anymore.

[Handout #1: **Reunion Priorities** (No. 4)]

If you think there are problems with your roles changing, look at No. #4 on the handout. Take 5 minutes to answer this in the space provided.

*(allow 5 minutes to complete)*

Seeing change as positive can assist in the adjustment phase. One way of doing this is through communication and by examining your priorities, as we have just done.

## **Adjustment Tips**

[Visual #3: **Adjustment Tips**]

Some hints to make the adjustment easier and reduce stress are to:

- ☞ Think positively (people may look and act differently, but they still care about you)
- ☞ Negotiate activities (the exercise we just completed can assist in doing this)
- ☞ Negotiate roles (don't change things that are working—be flexible and adjust gradually)
- ☞ Make time for all the important people in your life
- ☞ Be patient—it will take weeks, and even months to readjust
- ☞ Support positive changes
- ☞ Expect some tension in your intimate relations
- ☞ Expect unusual feelings (Where do I fit in now? Am I still needed?)
- ☞ Talk to your spouse, children, friends, and family members—use effective communication skills
- ☞ Ask for help if you need it

Remember this last tip—ask for help if you need it. There are many resources available to assist you if the adjustment and stresses of homecoming overwhelm you.

Keep in mind that it will take several weeks and even months after a long deployment for things to reach a “normal” state.

Also, remember “normal” does not mean “what used to be.” Here, it means that the symptoms of stress are reduced. The jumpiness, sleeplessness, fatigue, and other physical signs should stop after a reasonable period.

## Helpful Resources

*[Flip Chart activity (Facilitator)]*

If the signs of stress should continue, seek assistance. Let’s take a moment to list some available resources.

*(write responses on flip chart paper)*

*[Distribute Handout #2: **Sources of Support for Soldiers and Families**]*

Please take a moment to record this list of resources on the **Sources of Support for Soldiers and Families** handout, so that if you need assistance, you will have a place to start.

## Giving Back To The Community

*[Visual #4: **Giving Back to the Community**]*

The final area we will discuss is “giving back” to the community. The homecoming activities that you experienced took much planning, coordination, and support from the community.

This support often leaves the soldier and family members with a feeling of wanting to “give back” to those who supported them.

What does giving back to the community mean to you?

*(take a few responses)*

What are some ways you could do this?

*(take a few responses)*

Most communities and installations have established programs that would allow you to give of your time and talents?

Several examples of programs that could use your help are:

- ☞ Installation Volunteer Coordinator
- ☞ Guard or Reserve Family Program
- ☞ Family Support Group
- ☞ Civilian Social Service Agencies
- ☞ Voluntary Action Centers
- ☞ United Way or other charitable organizations

Some military communities have soldiers who work shifts. During their “off time,” soldiers from the unit assist underprivileged children. Others work in community projects to assist older citizens.

Do you know of any projects in your community that soldiers and their families are involved in? (take a few responses)

What are some ways that you could give back to your community?

*(take a few responses)*

My challenge to you is to find where you can give back to your community. This very act of giving back can help you readjust to the community and to being home again.

## **Conclusion**

*[Handout #3]*

During this workshop, you have looked at some stressors that you may have experienced during your readjustment to homecoming.

You have considered role negotiation.

Finally, you have thought of ways to give back to the community, so that you, too, can say, “Thanks for the support.”

I would like to leave you with a few closing thoughts:

- ☞ Adjusting to being home, and to having your soldier home, will take time.
- ☞ Be open to the changes that you have experienced in your life. Take it slowly. Do not rush. Enjoy being together again.

# Homecoming and Reunion

## Reunion Stress Management

Do you recognize the common stressors associated with reunion?

Would you like information on community support services ?

Do you want to rejoin your community life and to learn how to “give back” to them for their support?

This workshop will provide you with:

- ✦ take-home information
- ✦ checklists
- ✦ practical ideas
- ✦ opportunity to meet people with common interests

Join us at \_\_\_\_\_

For a workshop on \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

For more information contact \_\_\_\_\_

See you there!



# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

## **Reunion Stress Management**

### **Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**

**Resources for Educating About Deployment and You**





# Objectives

- ☐ **Recognize the stressors associated with reunion readjustment**
- ☐ **Identify information and referral services in your community**
- ☐ **Identify practical ways to give back to your community to show appreciation for their support**



# Readjustment Tips

- ☐ **Think and be positive!**
- ☐ **Negotiate activities and roles**
- ☐ **Make time for others**
- ☐ **Be patient**
- ☐ **Reinforce positive changes**
- ☐ **Expect tension and unusual feelings**
- ☐ **Get assistance if needed**



# **“Giving Back” to Your Community ?**

**How?**

**Where?**



## Reunion Priorities

1. Fill in the activities you would like to do with each of the following:

**Friends—who**

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**Spouse**

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**Children—who**

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**Other family members—who**

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**Myself**

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2. Looking at the information in No. 1., determine the priorities for each of these activities:

**Urgent Priority**

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**Urgent, but Not a Priority**

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**Not Urgent**

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**Not Urgent and Not a Priority**

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3. Answer those questions that apply to you.

☞ For the returning soldier:

✎ What role changes have you noticed since you returned from the deployment?

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✎ How could you adjust to the role changes? Or do you like the new roles and think no adjustments are necessary?

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☞ For those who stayed at home:

✎ What role changes happened while your soldier was deployed?

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✎ How could you assist your soldier in adjusting to the role changes? Or are there some you would like to change back to the way they used to be before deployment?

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4. If you need to discuss role changes, what are the positive and negative aspects of these changes?

☞ Which areas could you negotiate on?

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☞ What would you be willing to give up?

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## Sources of Support and Assistance for Soldiers and Families

Name	Location	Phone
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Location	Phone
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**Phone**This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





\*Use the back of this sheet to continue your responses, if necessary.